

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 9837

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3866

NODIS

FOR DAY AND AMBASSADOR BROWN: PASS SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE ELECTIONS

REF: (A) BEIRUT 3836 (B) SECTO 11203

1. MADE APPROACH TO JUMBLATT PRINCIPAL DEPUTY KHALAF AND JUMBLATT ADVISER ABOU-DIAB, ARGUING IN FAVOR OF NO DELAY IN MAY 1 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENT. PINTED OUT WE WERE IMPARTIAL IN DESIRE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS TO PROCEED FORTHWITH AND RECALLED THAT AMBASSADOR BROWN HAD VISITED FRANGIE WHEN IT APPEARED THAT FRANGIE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HOLDING UP MATTERS. MY APPROACH WAS LOW KEY IN LIGHT OF COMMENT CONTAINED BEIRUT 3836.

2. KHALAF REPLIED THAT HE APPRECIATED OUR STAND FROM A THEORETICAL POINT OF VIEW BUT THAT, FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR A BRIEF DELAY TO TAKE PLACE, I.E., UNTIL NEXT TUESDAY OR PERHAPS THURSDAY AT THE LATEST. THIS DELAY SHOULD COME ABOUT BY A DECISION TAKEN BY SPEAKER ASSAAD BEFOREHAND. ANOTHER WAY TO DELAY WOULD BE OF COURSE BY CAUSING CIVIL DISTURBANCES. HE THOUGHT THIS ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE INEVITABLE IF AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM ASSAAD WAS NOT FORTHCOMING. HE NOTED FURTHER THAT WHILE IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO SECURE THE IMMEDIATE AREA F PARLIAMENT, THERE WAS NO SAFE WAY TO PREVENT DISTURBANCES ELSEWHERE OR EVEN KIDNAPPINGS.

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3. KHALAF MADE WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE AN ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION. IF ASSAAD POSTPONED THE SESSION, A NEW PRESIDENT WOULD BE ELECTED NEXT WEEK. IF SECURITY REASONS CAUSED THE PARLIAMENT NOT TO MEET, THEN IT COULD WELL BE THAT THIS BODY WOULD NEVER MEET AGAIN. THIS WOULD BE A GREAT TRAGEDY AS PARLIAMENT WAS THE ONLY REMAINING CONSTITUTIONAL BODY. KHALAF ASSURED ME THAT HE WAS NOT THREATENING BUT MERELY GIVING ME AN EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION.

4. KHALAF REFERRED TO THE JUMBLATT-SARKIS MEETING, WHICH HE SAID WAS REALLY QUITE GOOD. HAD THE MEETING TAKEN PLACE A MONTH AGO, SARKIS WOULD BE PRESIDENT TODAY. JUMBLATT IS NOT AGAINST SARKIS. HE IS AGAINST HAVING SARKIS FORCED ON HIM BY THE SYRIANS. SYRIAN HAMFISTEDNESS WAS UNBELIEVABLE. SAIQA CHIEF MOHSEN WAS GOING AROUND TO THE DEPUTIES INDIVIDUALLY TO TELL THEM HOW TO VOTE. AFTER HE (KHALAF) AND ABOU-DIAB HAD CONVINCED JUMBLATT TO MODERATE HIS REMARKS, THE SYRIAN RADIO AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAD SOUNDED OFF AGAINST JUMBLATT. (NOT WITHOUT A SENSE OF HUMOR, ABOU-DIAB REFERRED TO KHADDAM AS THE SYRIAN RAYMOND EDDE, I.E., EACH HAD THE IRRESTISTABLE URGE TO MAKE "SMART-ASS" REMARKS WHEN ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS TO REMAIN SILENT.) A SHORT DELAY COULD ACCOMPLISH TWO THINGS, KHALAF WENT ON. IT COULD GIVE SARKIS ENOUGH TIME TO GET BACK TO THE SYRIANS TO URGE THE LATTER TO MAKE SOME SORT OF PEACE WITH JUMBLATT. IF THIS WERE NOT POSSIBLE, IT WOULD AT LEAST GIVE PARLIAMENT TIME TO REACH AGREEMENT ON A THIRD CANDIDATE OTHER THAN EDDE WHO, IT IS ACCEPTED, IS OUT THE RUNNING BECAUSE OF SYRIAN OBJECTION.

5. BOTH KHALAF AND ABOU-DIAB WOULD PREFER SARKIS, FEARING THAT A THIRD CANDIDATE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL WOULD BE A NON-ENTITY. THEY ARE KEENLY AWARE OF SARKIS'S GENUINE TALENTS. HOWEVER, SARKIS' ELECTION DEPENDS ON SYRIAN WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE LOCAL SENSITIVITIES, NOT THE LEAST BEING THOSE OF JUMBLATT.

6. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, KHALAF (LIKE PHALANGE POLITBURO REPRESENTATIVE PAKRODOUNI) VOLUNTEERED THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS IN THE U.S. INTEREST FOR AMBASSADOR BROWN NOT REPEAT NOT TO RETURN UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS. HE SMILED AND SAID THAT IF THE AMERICANS WOULD LIKE TO SEE SARKIS POSSIBLY WIN THAT

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THEY SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE ONE WAY TO FINISH HIS CHANCES COMPLETELY WOULD BE FOR AMBASSADOR BROWN TO RETURN BEFORE THE ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE. I REITERATED OUR POSITION THAT WE FAVOR NO INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE.

7. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, I AM SEEING DEPUTY CLOSE TO SPEAKER ASSAAD SHORTLY AND HAVE MEETING PLANNED THIS EVENING WITH PHALANGE POLITBURO MEMBER PAKRODOUNI.

WARING

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